

Lesson .1. The Last Lesson

Author: Alphonse Daudet

Long-answer-type questions:

Q.1 . The people in the story suddenly realize how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?

Ans: The story was written in the days of the Franco-Prussian war in which France was defeated by Prussia. In this story the French districts of Alsace-Lorraine have passed into Prussian hands. M. Hamel is the teacher of French and a boy, Franz who never serious in the class of M. Hamel. One day he was late for school. He feared that his teacher would scold as he was not very sure about participles which the teacher, M. Hamel, is going to test that day. But finally he decided to go to school. As he entered he saw the crowd has gathered round the bulletin board. He did not stop there. On arriving at school, he noted an unusual silence. He entered into the class and was greeted with a strange sight. The last benches which were always empty were occupied by the village elders who look grim and solemn. Franz noticed M. Hamel was dressed nicely and asked Franz to sit so that he could start his lesson. The teacher made a startling announcement that this would be their last lesson in French as the new teacher would be arriving the following day. He said, “ The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new teacher comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive.” There came a sudden change in the minds of the people and they developed a new profound love French. Franz was overcome with a feeling of remorse and regretted for wasting his time in trivial pursuits. He decided to pay attention to the lesson since school had become very important for him. The people and Franz himself realized how precious their language is to them. M. Hamel had been teaching in that school for last forty years. His dedication, devotion, discipline impressed them. He realizes the real worth of his school and the teacher whom they have all taken for granted all these years. M. Hamel in his last address told about the importance of French. He called that it was the most beautiful language in the world. It is the clearest and the most logical one. M.Hamel was overcome by strong emotions and in large letter he wrote on the board ‘Viva La France’ – long live France!

Q.2 Franz thinks:’ “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” What could this mean?

Ans: The Alsace and Lorraine districts were under the regime of France. During the FrancoPrussian war in which France was defeated by Prussia led by Bismarck and both these districts have passed into Prussian hands. Earlier they were learning their own language, French. As per new set up, an order was passed that German was to be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.M. Hamel who had been teaching the French for the last forty years. In his last lesson he told that from the next day in the schools of both districts would teach only German instead of French from a new teacher. They won’t be learning their own most beautiful, clearest and logical language. He told the importance of their own language, this feeling of M. Hamel aroused their patriotic feelings. There came a sudden change in Franz. He disliked learning German. He heard and saw the pigeons. He immediately remarked: “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” It is meant that the German can impose German language on the people of Alsace and Lorraine but they can’t

impose this language on the birds etc. They can enslave the people but have no authority to compel the cooing pigeons.

Short-answer questions :

Q.1.What was Franz expected to be prepared for school that day?

Ans. Franz was expected to be prepared the topic of ‘participles’ for school that day. But he did not know even the first word about them. So he was under great dread of being scolded by his teacher, M.Hamel.

Q.2.What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?

Ans: Franz noticed that it was all so still, calm and quiet like Sunday morning while on other days there used to be a great hustle and bustle. The same could be heard out in the street. The opening and closing of the desks, lesson repeated in unison very loud. But on that day the school looked so strange.

Q.3. Why was there a crowd in front of the bulletin board set up at the town hall?

Ans: It was set up for all kinds of information and news for the public. For the last two years, the people received all the bad news from there like the news of the lost battles and the orders of commanding officer etc. When Franz was passing the Town Hall, he saw a large crowd in front of the bulletin board reading the news which stated that the German would be taught in the districts of Alsace and Lorraine.

Q.4.How did the teacher describe the French language?

Or

What was the advice of M. Hamel about the importance of the French language?

Ans: M. Hamel was very dedicated teacher of French language. While teaching his last lesson, he touched upon many aspects of French. He called it the most clear and logical language in the world. He urged all to guard it and never to forget it. In case they hold fast in their language, they had the key to their prison.

Q.5. How did M. Hamel teach his last lesson in the class?

Ans: It was the last day of M. Hamel in school. He was in his fine dress. The villagers had come there to pay their last respects. M.Hamel taught his lesson on French so decently that the students realized French is an easy language. At last he became emotional. He could not speak, he dismissed the school with writing on the blackboard, “Viva La France.”

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:

1. What was the narrator’s greatest fear as he moved towards the school?

Franz had started late for school and thus was afraid of being scolded . His fear gripped him further for he was also unprepared. He had not learnt his lesson regarding the rules of participles and thus dreaded the teacher’s anger.

2. What was more tempting to Franz rather than going to school?

The weather was pleasant, warm and bright. The chirruping birds were inviting him, the soldiers drilling in the field were also outdoors and Franz was not prepared with participles.

3. What was the news which was put up on the bulletin board?

For the last two years all bad news – the lost battles, the orders of the commanding officer was displayed on the notice board. That day, the news that only German would be taught in school

of Alsace and Lorraine was displayed on the notice-board which made the crowd gather there to read the news.

4. What was so unusual about the school on that day?

Usually there would be a great bustle of opening and closing of the desk, lesson repeated loudly and the teacher's ruler rapping on the table but that day was very calm and quiet like Sunday morning. The back benches which were usually empty were occupied by the village people and M. Hamel wore his special dress and was pacing up and down with a ruler under his arm.

5. Why were the villagers seated on the back benches?

All the village elders were seated on the back benches as a tribute to the teacher who had put in 40 years of sincere service. It was also their way of expressing regret for not learning their mother tongue when they had the chance. They were also expressing their patriotism and solidarity with France

6. Franz didn't learn French whom did M. Hamel blame?

M. Hamel didn't blame Franz for not learning but his parents who were not anxious to have him learn. Instead they wanted him to work on a farm or at the mill to earn money. Even M. Hamel was also to be blamed for sending him to water the flowers instead of learning and when he wanted to go fishing he declared holiday.

7. What did M. Hamel say about French language?

He said that it is the most beautiful language in the world- the clearest, the most logical. He requested them to guard it so that they can be united and fight back for their freedom.

8. What happened when the church clock struck 12?

The moment the church clock struck 12 the Prussian army came to take over and M. Hamel stood up, wanted to tell something but his voice was choked. He gathered his strength and wrote on the black board as large as he could – 'Vive La France' and dismissed the school.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Justify the title of the story "The Last Lesson".

Value Points

People always feel there is plenty of time to learn—so also in Alsace—now no time—parents not keen—preferred children, work in farms, mill—Franz looked opportunity to escape school—never serious—receive orders from Berlin—people realize importance of their language—attend the last lesson by M. Hamel.

Lesson .2. Lost Spring (Stories of Stolen Childhood)

Author: Anees Jung

Long-answer-type questions:

Q.1. Explain the significance of title 'Lost Spring'.

Ans: In this lesson, the author Anees Jung examines and analyses the grinding poverty and tradition that condemn children to a life of exploitation. Saheb as a ragpicker whose parents have left behind a life of abject poverty in Bangladesh. His family, like the many other families of rag pickers lives in Seemapuri. They live in miserable condition. The writer is pained to see Saheb,

whose name means the ruler of the Earth, lose the spark of childhood. She then proceeds to tell about Mukesh who does want to be his own master. Hailing from Firozabad, the centre of India's bangle making and glass blowing industry, he has always worked in the glass making factory. His family does not know that it is illegal for children to work in such close to furnaces with such high temperatures. They are exposed to various health hazards like losing their eyesight as they work in dark and dingy cells. The family of bangle maker of Firozabad are so burdened that they have lost their ability to dream. The writer's observation is that these poor hopeless people are but pawn in the games that are played by Sahukars, middlemen, the policemen, the bureaucrats and the politicians. The title is meaningful as they lost their spring (childhood). The writer has beautifully essayed the story of stolen childhood with a view to sensitizing us to the plight of these poor unfortunate children.

Q.2 .Why do children walk barefoot, in cities, or on village roads? Is it a tradition or something else? What does the author Anees Jung sate about it in her story 'Lost Spring'?

Ans: In this story the author analyses the grinding poverty and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation. She has been noticing the group of barefoot rag pickers children for many months. She asks one why he is not wearing footwear. Another adds if he gets, he will throw them off. A third boy says that he wants shoes, he has never owned a pair all his life. Then the author tells a story of a man from Udipi as a young school boy, every morning on his way to school he would briefly stop at the temple and pray the goddess for a pair of shoes. When he had finally got a pair of shoes, he prayed, "Let me never lose them." When Sahib wears pairs of discarded tennis shoes due to a hole in one of them, it does not bother him. For one who has walked barefoot even shoes with a hole is a dream comes true. The reality of life is that there are number of innocent children who lose the spring (youth) of their lives under the threat of grinding poverty which exploit them under the demand of nature for satisfying their hunger for their survival. It is not due to lack of money but a tradition to stay barefoot, is one explanation. This is only an excuse for the continuing state of poverty which is the cause of the children staying barefoot in cities or on village roads.

Short-answer questions:

Q. 1. Who is Saheb? What is he looking for in the garbage dumps and where has he come from?

Ans: Saheb is a rag-picker of Seemapuri. The writer encounters him every morning scrounging for gold in the garbage dumps in her neighbourhood. He hails from Dhaka and he was migrated from Bangladesh in 1971. His house and fields were destroyed by storm.

Q.2. Why do these children remain barefoot?

Ans: Throughout the country the author has seen many barefoot rag picker children. On asking about not wearing chappals, they many excuses. One says that his mother has not brought them down from the shelf. Another point out that he will throw them if she brings. The third one replies that it is an excuse. It is not the lack of money.

Q.3. What is the condition of the children working in the glass factory/ furnaces of Firozabad?

Ans: More than 20,000 children are illegally working in glass blowing factories in Firoza- bad. They work around furnaces in high temperatures to weld glasses. They work in dingy cells without

light and air. Their eyes are adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. Many of them become victims of losing their eye-sight before they become adults. They work all day long. **Q.4. Who is Mukesh? What is his dream?**

Ans: He belongs to the family of bangle maker in Firozabad where each family is engaged in bangle making. They live in half built huts. Mukesh says. 'I will be a mother mechanic. I will learn to drive a car.' Thus he wants to be his own master.

Q.5. 'Garbage to them is gold.' Why does the author say so about the rag-pickers?

Ans: More than 10,000 rag-pickers of Seemapuri live in squatters. For them garbage is gold and it is wrapped in wonder. For a child, it is their bread. Sometimes a child can find a silver coin or more in a heap of garbage. For the elders it is a means of survival.

1. What does Saheb do for living? Why?

Saheb is a rag picker. His family has left the life of poverty behind in Dhaka in to pursue their dream of finding a better life. The children like him have no access to Education and are forced into rag picking

2. "Saheb is no longer his own master", says the writer. What does she mean? The writer means that having accepted the job with the tea-stall, Saheb has lost the independence that he enjoyed as a rag picker, even though he was poor. Although he will now be able to supplement the family income, it will be at the cost of his freedom, which is difficult, binding and unfair for someone so young.

3. Why did people migrate from the village in Dhaka to Delhi ?

Better education, job opportunities and living conditions.

4. What trade does the family of Mukesh follow? Why does the writer feel that it will be difficult for Mukesh to break away from this tradition?

Engaged in bangle making-difficult to break away from this trade. He belongs to the caste of bangle makers His family is caught in the web of sohukars, the middlemen, policemen, politicians and bureaucrats, from which there is no escape. **5. What does garbage symbolize for the adults and children?**

Adults –means of earning a livelihood. Children –wrapped in wonder, magical

1. Seemapuri a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it metaphorically. Justify this statement.

A. Seemapuri the rag pickers shanty is just in the outskirts of Delhi but it is far away from Delhi so far as Delhi's glitter and amenities are concerned. Here the squatters of Bangladesh who came after 1971 war live in structures of mud with roof of tin or tarpaulin. There is no sewerage, drainage or pipe water that Delites enjoy.

2. Through the years rag picking has acquired the 'proportion of a fine art' in Seemapuri. Justify the statement.

A. The means of survival of migrants of Bangladesh in Seemapuri is rag picking. Garbage to them is gold. Like a fine art that has no end in appealing the sense of beauty the rag picker's scrounging the garbage is a never ending process which provide them their daily bread day after day.

3. Does the rag picking mean the same thing for parents and children? Give reasons for your answer.

A. No, rag picking is not the same for parents and children. For children it is wrapped in wonders where as for parents it is the means of survival.

4. Why was not Saheb happy on getting a job?

A. Saheb was not happy on getting a job in tea stall for a salary of Rs.800/- per month as he lost his freedom. He had to carry the stall owner's steel canister in place of his bag. He lost his carefree look He was now no longer his own master. 5. Why don't the bangle makers of Firozabad organise themselves? A. The bangle makers are trapped in the vicious circle of middlemen and police. If they organise a co operative they will be hauled up, beaten and dragged to jail by police for doing something illegal. There is no leader to help them out from their misery. They are the victims of greed and injustice.

- See more at: [http://students-](http://students-learn.blogspot.com/2007/11/flamingo.html#sthash.bdqhAbCN.dpuf)

[learn.blogspot.com/2007/11/flamingo.html#sthash.bdqhAbCN.dpuf](http://students-learn.blogspot.com/2007/11/flamingo.html#sthash.bdqhAbCN.dpuf)

My Mother at 66

Poet: Kamala Das

1. "Driving from my parent's home to Cochin last Friday

Morning, I saw my mother, beside me, doze, open

mouthed, her face ashen like that

Of a corpse and realized with pain

That looked as old as she was

But soon put that thought far away."

a) Where is the poet at present?

The poet is on her way from her ancestral home to Cochin Airport ,travelling by a car with her aged mother dozing off leaning against her body. **b) How does the**

poet describe her mother?

The poet describes her mother as old, pale, cold and senile. As she dozed off beside her, the mother looked almost like a corpse, for her face was colorless and seemed to have lost the colour and vitality of life.

c) Who does 'she' refer to in the last line? What thoughts had she driven away?

'She' here refers to the poet, Kamala Das. She wanted to put the haunting thought of parting with her mother away.

d). Explain the expression'.... Pain that looked as old as she was...'

Her pain about losing her mother is as old as she was. The poetess wants to express the idea that the pain / fear was haunting her since her child hood.

2. "... but soon put that thought far away, and

looked out at young trees sprinting, the merry

children spilling out of their homes..."

a) What was the poet 'looking' at? What did she notice?

The poet was looking at her mother. She noticed the mother's ashen and almost lifeless face distraught with pain.

b) What thought did she try to drive away?

She tried to drive away the thought of her mother's approaching death.

c) Why did the poet start 'looking out'? What does her gesture suggest? The poet started looking out of the window because she wanted to drive away the pain and agony she experienced on seeing her aged mother. She wanted to drive away her helplessness in the wake of her mother's ageing and approaching death. **d) What did the poet see from the window of the car?**

The poet saw young trees running past her car and merry children sprinting out of their homes to play.

e) What did the images of 'young trees' and 'merry children' symbolize?

Trees and children symbolize the spring of life, its strength, vigor and happiness which contrasts with the lifelessness and helplessness that sets in with age.

3. " but after the airport's security
check, standing a few yards away, I
looked again at her, wan, pale as a
late winter's moon"

a) Who is 'I' and why is she at the airport?

'I' is the poet Kamala Das here and the poet was at the Cochin airport waiting to board the plane.

b) Who does 'her' refer to? How did she look like?

'Her' here refers to the poet's aged mother. In her declining stage of health, the mother looked pale, cold like a corpse and like a colourless, dull late winter moon.

c) Why does the narrator 'look at her again'?

The narrator looked at her mother once again for the last time before she left to reassure herself about the well being of her mother. She had tried to drive away the pain she had felt on seeing her weak and aged mother. It was a look of reassurance to meet her again, of anxiety and fear that it would be her last meeting.

d) Explain: 'wan, pale as a late winter's moon'.

In this simile, the poet similarises the mother's pale and withered face to the late winter's moon. Winter symbolizes death and the waning moon symbolizes decay. Just like the winter loses its magnificence and brightness in winter covered and dimmed in fog and mist, the thick cover of the winter of old age has made the mother weak, pale, withered, inactive and spiritless.

4. " and felt that old familiar ache, my childhood's fear, but all I said was, see you soon, Amma, all I did was smile and smile and smile."

a) What 'familiar ache' did the poet feel?

The 'familiar ache' refers to the poet's fear of losing her mother and the realization that she has not cared and cannot care for her ageing mother. It is an ache of helplessness. It is also a fear of separation from the mother or the mother's death.

b) What could have been the poet's childhood fears?

I think the poet's childhood fear was that she would lose her mother or be separated from her and that death would consume her mother. c) Did the poet share her thoughts with her mother?

The poet did not share her fears and agony with her mother. She only bid good bye to her with the hope of seeing her soon.

d) Why do you think, the poet did not share her thoughts with her mother? I

think the poet did not share her thoughts with her mother because they were caused by her fear of the unknown. Sharing them with the mother would have worried the frail old woman to death. e) Why did the poet only 'smile'?

The poet only smiled to hide her guilt, anxiety and fear of the unknown. Also, she wanted to bid a cheerful farewell to her mother before boarding the flight, giving a hollow promise wrapped in a meaningless smile..

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

1. What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?

When the poet looks at her mother's face she found that it had become pale and withered. She realized that her mother was at the edge of her life and her end was near. The thought that her mother would be soon separated from her caused unbearable pain and ache in the poet's heart.

2 What does the poet do to shrug off the painful thought of her mother's approaching end?

To get rid of the painful thought her mother's nearing end ,the poet shifter her attention from her mother's pale face to the sprinting trees and the happy children spilling out of their house.

3. Why does the poet draw the image of sprinting trees and merry children?

Sprinting trees and merry children bursting out from the doors suggest fresh life and warm energy, vitality , youthfulness, spirit etc.. The poet draws this

image to strikes a scene of contrast with the pale, dull and withered face of the mother at the declining stage of her health.

4. Why have the trees been described as sprinting?

The poet was driving in a car along with her mother. Her movement created the visionary, illusion of the trees outside appeared to be sprinting past.

5. Why has the mother been compared to the late winter's moon?

The late winter moon lacks luster. The mothers face was pale and withered. Moreover, the late winter moon suggests the end of season and mother too is nearing the end of her life, therefore the poet compares her with the late winter's moon.

6. What is the 'familiar ache'?

The fear of losing her mother has tortured the poet from her very childhood because she had been intimately bound up with her. Therefore this ache is familiar to her.

7. What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

The parting words of the poet reflect the poet's pain , frustration, guilt and helplessness . But she wears a smile on her face to mask her pain and to give hope, happiness and reassurance to her mother.